Designing safe and accessible bus stops

by Courtney Hansen

At its most basic, a bus stop consists of a sign to inform drivers and riders of the location of the stop and a landing area where riders board and get off the bus. With a few extra considerations, though, the basic bus stop can become much more than this: It can become a safe, inviting, and functional part of your transportation program.

The basics

Before adding new features to a bus stop, some basic pieces must be in order. The bus stop sign should be close enough to the road so that bus drivers can see it, but far enough away that side mirrors can clear it. It may be useful to position the sign to line up with the front of the bus when the passenger door is aligned with the landing area. If the sign is attractive and well-maintained, it can even serve to market your services.

The landing area should be a solid, level, non-slip surface, about five by eight feet, that is free of obstructions and is accessible to the bus. This allows riders to safely wait for and enter and exit the bus.

Improving comfort

One highly visible way to improve comfort at a bus stop is to add a shelter. High activity and proximity to key locations such as shopping centers or hospitals are good reasons to add a shelter. Shelters require considerable investment for installation and maintenance, however, so the decision to build a shelter is often driven by finances.

There are a few ways to ease the expense of purchasing and maintaining a shelter at a bus stop. One is to implement an "adopt-a-stop" program, in which local volunteers maintain the stop as a community service project. Another solution is to allow local companies to use advertising space on the shelter in exchange for money or services.

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This bus shelter of the "T" service in Lawrence, Kansas, has a bench, protects riders from the elements, and is easily accessible from the sidewalk.

If you decide that you do want to install a shelter, make sure that it satisfies ADA accessibility requirements. For instance, doorways should be at least 32 inches wide, and any lights should be uniform and placed to minimize glare on signage in the shelter. Additional information on accessibility requirements can be found at www.access-board.gov/adaag/html/adaag.htm. The bus stop should also allow those using it to see approaching buses clearly while protecting them from wind, sun, and bad weather.

Other, less expensive ways of adding comfort to a bus stop exist as well. Seating and trash receptacles can be added at stops where passengers may have to wait for long periods of time. Route information can be posted at bus stops, allowing new riders to inform themselves during the wait.

Improving safety

While customers certainly benefit from added comfort at a bus stop, adding to the safety of the stop should be a priority. This can be done by making sure passengers are protected from traffic, while still at a comfortable distance from the road, or adding lighting to stops that are used at night. It is also a good idea to reassess bus stop locations from time to time, as changing traffic conditions, additional development, and route changes may make a stop no longer safe or necessary.

For more information, a Transit Cooperative Research Program publication titled *Guidelines for the Location and Design of Bus Stops* is available at http://trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=2597.

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